THE MINISTER OF COAL (SHRI KARIYA MUNDA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) The cost of production of coal would vary from country to country due to various factors including geological nature of deposits, wage structure and technological advancement. The average production cost of coal per tonne in Coal India Limited (India) and USA during the year 1999-2000 was approximately Rs. 540.08 and $16.63 (Rupees 796.91) respectively.

(d) and (e) The geomining conditions/mining operations in India is not comparable with those in other countries. However, the following efforts are being made by Coal India Limited for improvement of coal production in India:

(i) increased production of raw coal and productivity.

(ii) mechanisation of the mines in phased manner with deployment of higher capacity HEMM, surface miner, SDL/LHD, powered support longwall, continuous miner etc.

(iii) cost reduction strategy put in force to contain overall cost of production.

Strike by Singareni Coal Mines workers

104. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Singareni Coal Mines workers are on warpath and have served strike notice against privatisation; and

(b) if so, the action taken to apprise workers about their future and job protection besides creating confidence amongst Trade Unions?

THE MINISTER OF COAL (SHRI KARIYA MUNDA): (a) Trade Unions operating in Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) have formed a Joint Action Committee called 'Singareni Parirakshana Committee' which served a Strike Notice dated 6th January, 2003 proposing to organize indefinite strike in the Company on or after 20th January, 2003 over a charter of ten demands. The number one demand related to no privatisation and contractisation in SCCL.

(b) The management of SCCL has taken all steps to appraise the workmen by way of pamphlets, wall posters, advertisements, electronic

media etc. of the factual position on the demands raised in their strike notice. The management as well as Andhra Pradesh Government had also written letters to the union leaders explaining the position. It was communicated to the workmen that SCCL has not transferred its business, ownership and title or assets to any private agency. Only certain non-core activities are being out sourced/off-loaded in a phased manner within the provisions of the Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, 1970. It was also conveyed that there is no retrenchment or compulsory retirement of any employees in SCCL.

Closure of ECL Mines

105. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAYYA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Union Government has not yet taken any specific decision on the closure of 22 mines of the Eastern Coalfields Limited;

(b) if so, whether the Union Government is making efforts to review seriously and find scope to make these viable;

(c) whether the reports published recently about the closure of these mines have been contradicted by the Ministry; and

(d) if so, by what time final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF COAL (SHRI KARIYA MUNDA): (a) to (d) The decision to close coal mines is taken by the coal companies on parameters such as exhaustion of coal reserves, economic viability of coal mines, safety consideration, technical feasibility etc. In ECL, 26 coal mines have been identified for suspension of operations on the ground of economic unviability. On a reference under the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provision) Act, 1985 (SICA), ECL has been declared a sick company by the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR). Since ECL is currently under the purview of the BIFR as a sick company, closing of the mines will also depend on the revival measures that may be finalised by BIFR for rehabilitation of ECL.